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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT PEREZ BRIEFS OPPOSITION ON COLOMBIA  
BORDER NEGOTIATIONS

REF: 76 CARACAS 9075 (NOTAL)

1. PRESIDENT PEREZ AND FOREIGN MINISTER ESCOBAR SALOM BRIEFED LEADERS OF OPPOSITION PARTIES (COPEI, MAS, MEP, URD AND PCV) ON PRESENT GOV THINKING ON COLOMBIA BOUNDARY DISPUTE DURING SERIES OF PRIVATE MEETING JANUARY 17-18.
2. ACCORDING TO JANUARY 19 CARACAS MORNING PRESS, PEREZ GAVE OPPOSITION LEADERS SUBSTANTIAL INFORMATION ON GOV BOUNDARY POSITION, WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO GULF OF VENEZUELA ISSUE. "EL NACIONAL" STATES THAT GOV FORMULA CONTEMPLATES THE CREATION OF ~~TWO~~ TWO MIXED STATE ENTERPRISES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION. ONE (51 PERCENT VENEZUELAN -- 49 PERCENT COLOMBIAN) WOULD BE LOCATED NEAR CASTELLETE ON THE GULF ON VENEZUELA IN VENEZUELAN TERRITORY. THE OTHER, APPARENTLY TO THE NORTH OF CASTELLETE, WOULD BE 51 PERCENT COLOMBIAN OWNED - 49 PERCENT VENEZUELAN IN COLOMBIAN TERRITORY. CLOSE TO THE LOS MONJES ISLANDS, ON THE VENEZUELAN CONTINENTAL SHELF, BOTH GOVERNMENTS WOULD CONSTRUCT AN OPERATING CAMP, WITH MAJORITY VENEZUELAN CAPITAL. STORY STATES THESE FACILITIES WOULD BE "FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION" WHICH IS AN EUPHEMISM FOR OIL EXPLORATION.
3. AD CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER AND LEADING DEPUTY CANACHE MATA (PROTECT) TOLD EMBOFFS JANUARY 18 THAT THE PRESIDENT HOPES TO RESOLVE COLOMBIAN "DIFERENDO" PROBLEM AND HENCE DECIDE TO BRIEF THE OPPOSITION ON THE STATE OF PLAY. CANACHE SAID THAT GIVEN THE SENSITIVITY OF THE ISSUE, AND THE POTENTIAL FOR XENOPHOBIC POSTURING ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BOUNDARY, THE ISSUE MUST BE HANDLED WITH THE UTMOST CARE. HE SAID BOTH SIDES WOULD NECESSARILY HAVE TO MAKE CONCESSIONS AND THAT, ALTHOUGH VENEZUELA IS NOT IN A

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POSITION TO CONCEDE TERRITORY, THE GOV HAS PREPARED THE MIXED ENTERPRISE CONCEPT AS A POSSIBLE FINAL SOLUTION. CANCHE ALSO SAID THAT THE GOV WOULD BE WILLING TO CONSIDER OTHER ECONOMIC CONCESSIONS BUT DID NOT ELABORATE.

4. COMMENT: NEITHER CANACHE NOR FOREIGN MINISTER WHOM PRESS QUOTES THIS MORNING, GAVE ANY INDICATION THAT AN AGREEMENT IS IMMINENT, A VIEW WE SHARE. PRESIDENT PEREZ, HOWEVER, HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED TO CONTINUE TO SEEK A SOLUTION TO THIS THORNY ISSUE BEFORE HIS TERM EXPIRES. VAKY

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